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STATE FOR SCA/CEN (PERRY)

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: "BULLDOZER" HAKIM USES TEACHERS TO BEAUTIFY CITY

Summary

1. (SBU) Appointed on July 8, 2005, Ashgabat Hakim (mayor) Orazmyrat Esenov has been conducting a series of city beautification projects, including the elimination of residential garages and private vegetable gardens. From March 4 until the Nowruz National Spring Holiday, March 20-22, teachers of all Ashgabat city schools and kindergartens are assigned a division of the city to clean on weekends. End Summary.

The Bulldozer - Dizzy with Success

2. (SBU) Orazmyrat Esenov was praised by President Niyazov and promoted from Mary City Hakim to Ashgabat Hakim July 8, 2005, for keeping Mary City clean and for not promoting nepotism. He earned the nickname "bulldozer" because he enthusiastically enacted the president's "beautification" project and destroyed old structures throughout Mary City. In Ashgabat, for the sake of enhancing municipal "cleanliness and neatness" Esenov has ordered the apartment residents of multiple story buildings to get rid of garages or private gardens, according to a local embassy staff member who lost both a garage and a garden.

3. (SBU) Known for his rudeness to subordinates and obsequiousness to superiors, Esenov tried to "improve" the Ashgabat beautification campaign. Shortly after his appointment, he announced a contest among Ashgabat etraps (districts) for the best beautification results, according to local contacts. Esenov managed to refurbish and re-equip two abandoned sports complexes in Ashgabat, although to do this he demanded labor and in-kind contributions from various Ashgabat offices funded by the state budget. From March 4 until the Nowruz national spring holiday, March 20-22, all teachers of Ashgabat schools and kindergartens were assigned cleaning responsibilities for areas in the city. According to an elementary school teacher, a sister of a local embassy employee, the assigned areas are reportedly far from their schools or homes. Furthermore, the teacher said they were tasked with doing all considerable menial work, including sweeping, digging, and gardening to both residential and commercial areas of the city.

Comment

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14. (SBU) Esenov has resurrected the Soviet style Saturday cleaning sessions (subotniki) and extended them to the entire weekend for one month probably in an effort to put himself in Niyazov's good graces. By destroying private garden plots, often used for self-sufficiency, he will likely alienate city residents. Nevertheless, other than increased grumbling, popular protests are not expected. It is just one more burden to bear as Ashgabatians enjoy their Nowruz holiday. End Comment.

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